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SENATOR
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Senate Bill 27 (Simitian, Machado, Perata, Steinberg)
as amended March 29, 2007
Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta

Fact Sheet

- The Legislature has increasingly called for actions to resolve the conflicts in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. During its 2005-06 Regular Session, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed Assembly Bill 1200 (Laird), Senate Bill 1574 (Kuehl), and Assembly Bill 1803 (Committee on Budget).

- Together, these bills require an assessment of the potential impacts on water supplies of catastrophic failures in the delta, identification and evaluation of options to protect water supplies and the ecosystem of the Delta, the development of a vision for a sustainable Delta, and a strategic plan to achieve a sustainable Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

- The recent work by the Public Policy Institute of California and the University of California's Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning demonstrates that there already is a significant body of knowledge regarding the challenges to the Delta and potential options for resolving those challenges.

- Accordingly, the Legislature expects, consistent with the Governor's Executive Order S-17-06, that by January 1, 2008, the Blue Ribbon Task Force will present a report to the Delta Vision Committee and Governor that will focus most of its attention on exploring and evaluating the five options for water transfer that the Public Policy Institute of California found most promising.

- Those five water transfer options are two versions of an isolated conveyance system, two options with reduced exports, and one option featuring an armored, but not isolated, conveyance system.

- The bill also requires the legislature to develop funding, governance, and management structures consistent with the policies described in the PPIC report.

DETAILS

In developing a model for water movement that is consistent with the five options outlined by the PPIC, a successful system must be designed to accomplish all of the following:

1. Optimize opportunities to manage the Delta as a fluctuating tidal estuary within and between water years to mimic historic salinity patterns throughout the Bay-Delta ecosystem.
2. Optimize opportunities for recovery and restoration of native aquatic and terrestrial species utilizing best available technologies for minimizing entrainment of native fish during water export.
3. Significantly reduce quantities of salts, halides, dissolved solids, pollutants, organic chemicals, and carcinogenic precursors in water exported from the Delta for municipal, agricultural, and industrial uses.
4. Use the best available science and technology to restore populations of native fisheries in the Sacramento, San Joaquin, Mokelumne, and Cosumnes River systems.
5. Optimize the operation of the Delta to diminish, or if possible, eliminate undesirable invasive nonnative aquatic plants, fish, and invertebrates.
6. Optimize opportunities for existing in-Delta users to receive water pursuant to their water rights.
7. Allow for export of water at times and in ways that have the least impact on native fish populations, water supply, and water quality.
8. Provide for the greatest possible protection of existing water transmission and export facilities and transportation facilities within the Delta.
9. Maximize the opportunity to preserve existing Delta islands for purposes of preservation and restoration of native fish and wildlife, and agricultural production consistent with that preservation and restoration.

NEED FOR THE BILL

The Delta Is Unstable. According to Dr. Jeff Mount at The University of California at Davis, the Delta is not a "static landscape." The State Department of Water Resources has determined that the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta is geologically unstable. Global warming is raising ocean levels and the Delta is below sea-level. Earlier spring runoff will make for bigger floods, overwhelming the fragile Delta levees. Anticipated earthquakes threaten to collapse levees, sucking in ocean water from the San Francisco Bay making Delta waters unusable.

Crashing Fish Populations. Salmon runs in the southern Delta are at about one percent of historical levels. Delta smelt, already a threatened species, fell last fall to the lowest levels ever measured. Striped bass, chosen as the indicator species in 1959, are in rapid decline.

Island Subsidence. Delta islands are sinking. Some are more than 20 feet below sea level, protected by inadequate levees. Subsidence of the Delta islands is caused by wind erosion, lack of sediment replenishment resulting from the levees, soil compaction due to farm machinery, peat soil oxidation, and other factors.

Earthquakes, Flooding, and Sea Rise. A major earthquake in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta could cause widespread levee failure and flooding, costing the state more than $30 billion in long-term losses and tens of thousands of jobs. According to the Department of Water Resources, a magnitude 6.5 earthquake in the western Delta could tear 30 breaches in the levees that protect water supplies for 23 million Californians and some of the nation's most productive farmland. According to DWR, it would take 5 years and billions of

dollars of work to restore all water deliveries from the Delta. Job losses could exceed 30,000 and the cost to the state's economy could total $30 billion to $40 billion.

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